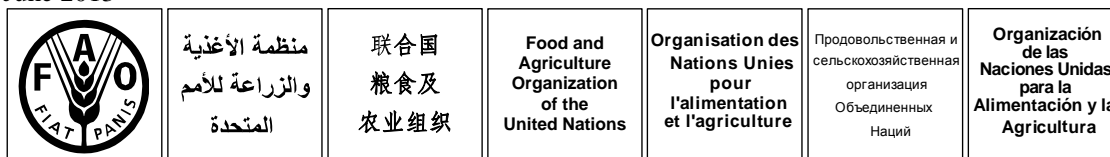


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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

SUB-COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE

Seventh Session

St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, 7-11 October 2013

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING CONFORMITY OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CERTIFICATION SCHEMES WITH THE FAO TECHNICAL GUIDELINES ON AQUACULTURE CERTIFICATION

Executive Summary

This working document presents the draft Evaluation Framework to assess the conformity of public and private certification schemes with the FAO Technical guidelines on Aquaculture Certification.

The Sub-Committee is invited to:

review the document and approve the Evaluation Framework.

BACKGROUND

1. Driven by concerns that some forms of aquaculture are environmentally unsustainable, socially inequitable and that products are not safe for consumers, there have been attempts, over the years, to respond to the consequent public perceptions and market requirements. In this regard, food safety standards were elevated and international trade regulations tightened. Policy and regulations governing environmental sustainability were put in place in many countries, requiring aquaculture producers to comply with more stringent environmental mitigation and protection measures. In order to respond to these environmental and consumer concerns on aquaculture production and to secure better market access, there is increasing interest in the certification of aquaculture production systems, practices, processes and products from aquaculture.
2. Aquaculture certification schemes are being developed and implemented at international and country levels. The certification of aquaculture farms, inputs and marketing and processors is being introduced, either individually or in a coordinated manner, to credibly demonstrate that production practices are not polluting, disease transmitting, ecologically threatening and/or socially irresponsible. Some countries are attempting to introduce state-mediated certification procedures to certify that

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aquaculture products are safe to consume and farmed in accordance with certain environmental and social standards.

3. The Sub-Committee on Aquaculture, during its third session held in India in September 2006, recognized the value of certification for increasing public and consumer confidence in aquaculture production practices and products and also noted that some certification schemes have resulted in higher costs for producers without delivering significant price benefits to small-scale producers. The Sub-Committee also pointed out that the costs of such schemes were a disadvantage to small-scale producers and it was recognized that the requirements for effective certification between small-scale and large-scale producers are different and should be adequately addressed.

4. The third session of the Sub-Committee on Aquaculture commented that the emergence of a wide range of certification schemes and accreditation bodies was creating confusion amongst producers and consumers alike and thus the necessity for more globally accepted norms for aquaculture production, which could provide better guidance, serve as a basis for improved harmonization and facilitate mutual recognition and equivalence of such certification schemes. The Committee requested FAO to take the lead in facilitating the development of international aquaculture certification guidelines for consideration once national and regional aquaculture standards were developed and which would serve as a basis for improved harmonization or mutual recognition, of the various certification schemes.

5. After a transparent and exhaustive consultative process, FAO developed the Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification, which were approved by the fifth session of the FAO Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (COFI-AQ V), held in Phuket, Thailand from 27 September to 1 October 2010 and subsequently endorsed by the 29th session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries in February 2011.

6. Whilst approving the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification, the COFI-AQ V noted that the implementation of the Guidelines would be gradual and that the existing standards and guidelines set by international organizations and instruments such as the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) for aquatic animal health and welfare, CODEX Alimentarius Commission for Food Safety and ILO for socio-economic aspects should be fully adhered to when setting standards for certification.

7. The Committee also noted that, in the absence of a precise international reference framework for the implementation of the minimum criteria contained in the Guidelines, it would be necessary to develop appropriate standards in order to ensure that the certification systems do not become unnecessary barriers to trade. The COFI-AQ V also noted the need for the provision of assistance for capacity development on certification in developing countries. COFI-AQ V also recommended that FAO develop an Evaluation Framework to assess the conformity of public and private certification schemes with the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification.

8. Whilst endorsing the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification, COFI-29 also recommended that FAO develop an Evaluation Framework to assess the conformity of public and private certification schemes with the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification. The Thirtieth Session of COFI, held in July 2012, reiterated the need for developing a conformity assessment framework for aquaculture certification guidelines.

FOLLOW-UP PROCESS

9. With financial support from the European Union (EU), the COFI-AQ Secretariat organised an Expert Workshop to discuss and review a draft Evaluation Framework to assess the conformity of public and private certification schemes with the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification. The workshop was held from 11-13 December 2012 at FAO, Rome and attended by 27 experts from various regions. The list of participants is provided in Annex 1.

10. The Evaluation Framework will be developed in accordance with the minimum criteria and requirements set out in the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification. Once approved, it will be made available for stakeholders to use as necessary to evaluate aquaculture certification schemes against the criteria in the framework.

11. Aquaculture certification schemes that meet the requirements set out in the Evaluation Framework are to be considered as being in compliance with the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification. FAO will not undertake the conformity assessment of certification schemes per se but will provide the tools with which others may undertake the assessment. The actual evaluation process is expected to be used as a self-assessment tool by the certification scheme holder. It can also be used by parties with an interest in assessing the conformity of certification schemes with the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification. These might include governments, consumers, retailers, processors and harvesters and any other relevant civil society organizations that are seeking to make assessments against the agreed criteria.

12. The revised draft Evaluation Framework which incorporated the inputs provided by the experts attending the workshop is hereby presented to the Seventh Session of the COFI Sub-Committee on Aquaculture (Annex 2), for discussion and decision.

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ANNEX 2

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING CONFORMITY OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CERTIFICATION SCHEMES WITH THE FAO TECHNICAL GUIDELINES ON AQUACULTURE CERTIFICATION

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The primary purpose of this Evaluation Framework is to assess the conformity of a certification scheme with the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification.

EXPECTED USERS OF THE EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The expected users of this Evaluation Framework are certification scheme owners, governments, consumers, producers and stakeholders that may have an interest in the field of conformity assessment.

This working document presents the draft Evaluation Framework to assess the conformity of public and private certification schemes with the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification.

THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation to assess the conformity of a certification scheme with the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification must consider the following in their entirety:

1. The FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification;
2. All components of the certification scheme;
3. This Evaluation Framework.

To begin the evaluation process, the certification scheme must make a clear, unambiguous statement of its goal and scope relative to the Principles, Institutional and Procedural components, and Minimum Substantive Criteria components of the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification. That is, this statement must describe which Minimum Substantive Criteria issue areas the scheme intends to cover, and which issue areas it does not intend to cover.

The evaluation team needs to be defined and records of their meetings and decisions should be retained on file to provide transparency of process. The qualifications of each team member should be noted, along with a declaration that there is no conflict of interest arising.

Next, the certification scheme must be subject to evaluation against the Principles and Institutional and Procedural components of the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification, including all of the requirements of these components as described in this evaluation framework.

Should the scheme meet all the Principles and Institutional and Procedural components requirements as expressed in the framework (Evaluation Framework – Part 2 – Institutional and Procedural Requirements), the evaluation can then proceed to the components on Minimum Substantive Criteria, according to the issue areas identified in the scheme goal, and according to all of the requirements for the issue areas as described in this evaluation framework.

Only if the evaluation against the Minimum Substantive Criteria fulfills all the requirements of at least one of the issue areas (Animal Health and Welfare, Food Safety, Environmental Integrity, Socio-economic aspects) can the evaluation begin to make a statement of conformance.

At this point, the evaluation must make an evaluation of the Special Considerations for Implementation as described in the framework. In evaluating conformance of a certification scheme with the Guidelines for Aquaculture Certification the assessor should use the Guidelines for guidance.

The Evaluation Framework is presented in two parts. Part 1 deals with principles and minimum substantive criteria. In this section, the evaluation of conformity is assessed by answering a series of questions directly relevant to a specific paragraph of the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification. The expected answers are either YES or NO. The evaluator is expected to provide evidence if the assessment is positive and explain why if the assessment is negative.

Part 2 of the Evaluation Framework deals with institutional and procedural requirements. The guidance provided in the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification under the Institutional and Procedural Requirements is divided in to seven categories: (a) Governance, (b) Standard Setting, (c) Accreditation, (d) Certification, (e) Chain of Custody, (f) Use of Certification Claim, Symbol, Label or Logo, and (g) Resolution for Complaints and Appeals. Each category refers to a certain number of paragraphs in the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification and a set of criteria is provided for the evaluator to confirm if the certification scheme complies with the specific guidelines outlined in those paragraphs/sections. The evaluator is required to carefully review and ensure that all documentation adequately reflects the conformity of the scheme, under the above seven categories, with the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification. The criteria provided in the Evaluation Framework are considered adequate to establish conformity or non-conformity.

If the assessment does not determine conformance with any of the issue areas, no statement of conformity of any sort with the Technical Guidelines for Aquaculture Certification can be made.

STATEMENTS OF CONFORMITY

Subject to the assessment process as described above, the following Statement may be used to express conformance with the Technical Guidelines for Aquaculture Certification:

This aquaculture certification scheme conforms with all of the requirements of the Principles and Institutional and Procedural components of Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification (paragraphs 17, 58-171), as well as all of the requirements of the Minimum Substantive Criteria components of the Technical Guidelines for Aquaculture Certification for the following issue areas:

- a) INSERT ISSUE AREA TITLE (paragraphs.....)
- b) INSERT ISSUE AREA TITLE (paragraphs.....)
- c) INSERT ISSUE AREA TITLE (paragraphs.....)
- d) INSERT ISSUE AREA TITLE (paragraphs.....)

This statement must be accompanied with a statement of the scheme's goal and scope, as noted above. Moreover, the name of the individual/organization who conducted the assessment must be provided.

These statements must be accompanied by comments on the Special Considerations for Implementation (paragraphs 172-176).

The conformity statement should describe as follows: "According to the evaluation conducted by Body X on (date), Certification Scheme Y, standard(s) Z, conforms with the FAO Aquaculture Certification Guidelines for the following Issue Areas: a, b, c, d."

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK – PART 1 – PRINCIPLES AND MINIMUM SUBSTANTIVE CRITERIA

PRINCIPLES AND MINIMUM SUBSTANTIVE CRITERIA				
PARAGRAPH NUMBER	GUIDANCE QUESTION	CONFORMATION YES/NO	EVIDENCE IF YES and EXPLAIN IF NO	NOTES/REMARKS
Principles				
17	1. Does the scheme adequately address the principles of the FAO Technical Guidelines on Aquaculture Certification?			
MINIMUM SUBSTANTIVE CRITERIA				
Animal health and welfare				
19	2. Is animal health and welfare included in the scheme?			
20	3. Does the scheme use relevant OIE standards (Aquatic Animal Code and Diagnostic Manual) and FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF) as normative basis and does it respect national legislation and regulations?			
20-26	4. If the scheme requires an aquatic animal health management programme that is risk-based, specific to the unit of certification and production system and includes elements outlined in 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 below, please answer accordingly.			
21	4.1. Element on movement (introduction and transfer) of aquatic animals, genetic materials and products?			
22, 25	4.2. Element on maintenance of culture environment? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water quality and temperature • Appropriate quarantine measures and facilities • Routine monitoring of stocks and environment for early detection of aquatic animal health problems • Management practices to reduce stress and disease transmission within and between aquaculture facilities and natural fauna 			

23	4.3. Element on responsible use of veterinary medicines that ensures effectiveness, safety of public and animal health and protection of the environment?			
24	4.4. If polyculture or Integrated Multi-trophic Aquaculture (IMTA) is used, does scheme have consideration for species selection for minimizing the potential disease transmission?			
26	4.5. Does the scheme has training requirements included on all aspects related to animal health and welfare covered in 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 above?			
Food safety				
27	5. Is food safety included in the scheme?			
	6. Does the scheme refer to national or international standards and regulations including the food safety aspects of the Codex Alimentarius?			
28	7. Does the scheme address the location of aquaculture facilities with respect to food safety risk?			
29	8. Does the scheme require procedures to address food safety risks associated with feed?			
30	9. Does the scheme address the correct use and relevant controls of veterinary drugs as prescribed in national regulations and international guidelines?			
31	10. Does the scheme take into account the quality of water in the aquaculture production of food intended for human consumption?			

32	11. Does the scheme ensure minimizing the risks of potential human health hazards in the sourcing of broodstock and seed?			
33	12. Does the scheme have a requirement for detailed records of activities and inputs that represent a potential source of risk with particular emphasis on the use of chemicals and veterinary drugs?			
34	13. Does the scheme require a comprehensive hygiene plan covering followings? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The culture unit • The farm area • Pest control • Management and handling of aquaculture products 			
35	14. In the case that the scheme covers bivalves, does the scheme require a hazard analysis and management plan to prevent food safety risks?			
36	15. Does the scheme include worker training in good hygienic practices to ensure they are aware of their roles and responsibilities for protecting aquaculture products from contamination and deterioration?			
Environmental integrity				
37	16. Is environmental integrity included in the scheme:			
	17. Does the scheme require aquaculture planning and practice in accordance with appropriate local, national and international laws and regulations?			
38	18. Does the scheme have provision to encourage environmental restoration?			

39	Covered under Min. Sub. Criteria 44 and 46			
40	19. Does the scheme set measurable benchmarks that encourage improvement and innovation in environmental performance without being overly prescriptive?			
41	20. Does the scheme consider application of “precautionary approach” in accordance with the relevant [provisions of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries?			
42	Covered under Min Sub Criteria 44, 46, 49 and 50			
43	20. Does the scheme create awareness of external environmental costs associated with environmental impacts?			
44	21. Does the scheme require an environmental impact assessment in accordance with national law?			
45	22. Does the scheme require a regular monitoring and record keeping system of environmental quality on the farm and its immediate area of influence, using appropriate methodologies?			
	23. Does the scheme describe the methodologies required, taking into account the scale of operation?			
46	24. Does the scheme require an evaluation of the adverse impacts on the surrounding natural ecosystem, including fauna, flora, and habitat?			
	25. Does the scheme require appropriate mitigation measures for the identified adverse impacts on the surrounding natural ecosystem?			
47	26. Does the scheme include provisions to promote efficient water use?			

	27. Does the scheme require management of the quality of the effluent?			
	28. Has the scheme made provision for the farmers to address efficient use and effluent management?			
48	29. Does the scheme encourage the use of hatchery produced seed as the primary source?			
	30. If hatchery produced seed are not used, does the scheme require wild seed to be collected in a responsible manner?			
49	31. Does the scheme accept the use of exotic species? If yes, does the scheme have a methodology to ensure that the level of risk to natural environment and ecosystem health is acceptable?			
50	32. Does the scheme have a methodology to ensure that the level of risk from genetically altered aquatic organisms has been assessed and managed?			
51	33. Does the scheme have provisions to ensure responsible infrastructure construction and waste disposal?			
52	34. Does the scheme have provisions to ensure responsible use of feeds, feed additives, chemicals, veterinary drugs, including antimicrobials, manure and fertilizer to avoid their adverse impacts on the environment meanwhile promoting economic viability?			
Socio-economic aspects				
53	35. Are socio-economic aspects included in the scheme:			

	36. Does the scheme indicate that aquaculture be conducted in a socially responsible manner within national laws and regulations?			
	37. Does the scheme encourage aquaculture's contribution to socio-economic development?			
	38. Does the scheme require aquaculture to safeguard the livelihoods of aquaculture workers and local communities?			
54	39. Does the scheme recognize (encourage) corporate social responsibility with local communities?			
55	40. Does the scheme require responsible treatment of workers in accordance with national labour laws and regulations and relevant ILO conventions?			
56	41. Does the scheme require paying wages and providing benefits and working conditions in accordance with the national laws and regulations?			
57	42. Does the scheme address the issue of child labour?			
	42.1. If YES to 42, are provisions consistent with ILO conventions and international standards?			

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK – PART 2 – INSTITUTIONAL AND PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS

Institutional and Procedural Requirements		
KEY ELEMENT	PARAGRAPH NUMBER	PROPOSED CONFORMAMNCE CRITERIA
Governance	61 - 65	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A certification scheme in conformance with the key elements for: standard setting; Accreditation; Certification; Chain of Custody; Use of Certification claim, symbol, label or logo; and Resolution for Complaints and Appeals. • The owner or developer of a certification scheme should be transparent on the scheme’s governance structure, ownership, standards, and their respective responsibilities; • The owner or developer of a certification scheme should have clear written procedures to guide the scheme’s internal decision-making processes; • The scheme owner should have a clear policy to monitoring and prevent any conflict of interest between Standard Setting Body, Accreditation Body and Certification Body.
Standard Setting	66 – 85	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards are developed in conformance with WTO TBT Annex 3 Code of Good Practice for the Preparation, Adoption and Application of Standard; ISO Guide 59 or the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Standard Setting; • The owner of a certification scheme shall be transparent on the procedures for the development of its standard for certification, including a clear policy to include and monitor : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ adequate stakeholder representation; ○ best available scientific evidence, taking into account traditional knowledge provided it can be objectively verified; ○ in conformance with the Minimum Substantive Criteria as laid out in the guidelines taking into account the defined scope of the scheme; and ○ compliance with national and international laws and regulations • Information on the members of the standard setting body and work program are publically available in appropriate languages; and • Standards and subsequent revisions are made available for public comments and consultation before adoption;
Accreditation	86 - 123	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A scheme owner shall assign one or more independent National Accreditation Body that signed the Memorandum of Understanding of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) for ISO-65 Accreditation for the accreditation of its certification bodies conducting conformity assessments; • If a scheme assigns one or more independent accreditation body or entity which is not a member of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) to accredit certification bodies conducting conformity assessments for the scheme, the accreditation body or entity shall have a clear policy to implement and monitor conformance with the ISO-17011 standard for accreditation.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scheme owner shall demonstrate that the accreditation process is open to all interested certification bodies irrespective of the number of certification bodies already accredited, or on the location, size, or membership of any association or group (Para 89); and • If a scheme can demonstrate conformance with the ISO 17011 it is considered conformant with paragraphs 86 - 123 in the Guidelines, if not schemes shall demonstrate conformity with the individual paragraphs 86 - 123.
Certification	124 – 154	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conformity assessments of aquaculture operations and facilities against the certification standard of the program are conducted by an accredited independent certification body. • The scheme owner shall demonstrate its certification bodies are accredited in conformance with the ISO-65 guide by an independent accreditation body or entity for the scope of the schemes standard (formal ISO-65 accreditations can only be conducted by a National Accreditation Body that signed the Memorandum of Understanding of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) for ISO-65 Accreditation). • If a scheme can demonstrate conformance with the ISO 65 it is considered conformant with paragraphs 124 - 154 in the Guidelines, if not schemes shall demonstrate conformity with the individual paragraphs 124 - 154.
Chain of Custody	126, 127 & 155 – 160	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scheme owner requires a chain of custody assessment is in place requiring all certified aquaculture products to be identified and differentiated from non-certified aquaculture products at the key points of transfer; • The scheme owner requires assessments against the chain of custody requirements to be conducted by an accredited independent certification body, for all product carrying the label; • The certification body is ISO-65 (or equivalent) accredited by an independent accreditation body or entity for the relevant scope for the chain of custody requirements.
Use of certification claim, symbol, label or logo	161 - 166	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The owner of the certification scheme has documented procedures describing the requirements, restrictions or limitations on the use of symbols, labels or logos indicating that an aquaculture product comes from a certified aquaculture operation. Such procedures comply with the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scheme owner has a written procedure regarding the use of the symbol or logo; • The scheme demonstrates that symbols, logos and claims are clearly defined and in conformance with the scope of the scheme and do not cause barriers of trade or mislead the consumer; and • The scheme owner and/or certification body, as appropriate, issue written authorizations and/or licenses to affix the scheme's mark/claim/logo only when the aquaculture operations or products and chain of custody have been certified as being in conformity with the scheme. (162 and 164) • The certification body, accreditation body, or owner of the certification scheme has mechanisms in place to ensure that no fraudulent or misleading use is made (with the use and display) of its certification mark and logos. • The certification body, accreditation body, or owner of the certification scheme takes suitable action to deal with incorrect references to the certification system or misleading use of symbols and logos found in advertisements, catalogues, etc. • Certificates for use of the scheme's mark/claim/logo include:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the name and address of the accreditation body or the certification scheme owner; ○ the name and address of the certification body; ○ the name and address of the certification holder; ○ the effective date of issue of the certificate; ○ the substance of the certificate; ○ the term for which the certification is valid; ○ signature of the issuing officer.
Resolution for Complaints and Appeals	167 - 171	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The accreditation body or entity or owner of the certification scheme shall demonstrate written policy and procedures, applicable to accredited certification bodies, for dealing with any complaints and appeals from involved parties in relation to any aspect of the certification or de-certification. Such procedures comply with the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The complaints procedure is timely and clearly defines the scope and nature of appeals that will be considered; ○ Costs of appeals are borne by the appellant; ○ An independent and impartial committee is established by the scheme owner or the AB to respond to any complaint. If discussion and/or conciliation fail, the committee provides a written finding to the CB, AB or scheme owner which transmits it to the other party or parties involved (168 and 169); ○ The certification body, accreditation body, or owner of the certification scheme, as appropriate, takes appropriate corrective and preventive action following the determination of the committee but this does not exclude recourse to other forms of legal and administrative processes as provided for in national legislation or international law; ○ The certification body, accreditation body, or promoter/owner of the certification scheme (as appropriate) keeps a record of all complaints, remedial actions relative to certification and assesses the effectiveness of remedial actions; and ○ The certification body, accreditation body, or promoter/owner of the certification scheme (as appropriate) safeguards the confidentiality of information obtained during the investigation and resolution of complaints.